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RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4431
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1350
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 004612

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: MOD OSPINA EXPRESSES DETERMINATION TO MAKE FURTHER
PROGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood
Reasons: 1.4(a), (b), (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Minister of Defense (MOD) Camilo Ospina asked to see the Ambassador on May 22 to discuss his determination to ensure further progress by the COLMIL in the field of human rights. This followed an April 22 working meeting with the MOD and military high command during which the Ambassador pressed hard for more improvements and a genuine transformation of the COLMIL human rights culture, to dispel any doubt regarding its commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights. Ospina invited the Ambassador to see COLMIL progress in the field and discussed his intention to show a more transparent approach to the press and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to better explain what the COLMIL has been doing. End Summary.

Ospina Keen to Prove Progress

¶2. (C) Ospina stressed that he and his team have taken charge of the issue and were eager to prove it. The MOD said he could do little about past incidents, such as at Mapiripan in 1997, beyond pressing for the conclusion of judicial proceedings. However, he was determined to resolve more recent cases such as those involving the peace community of San Jose de Apartado, on which the GOC had been working hard. He invited the Ambassador and/or members of Congress to visit the community in person with him, house by house if necessary, to demonstrate that the situation has improved. The Ambassador said he would be glad to accompany the MOD on a visit.

Orientation to Press and NGOs

¶3. (C) The Ambassador proposed a more proactive and open approach to the press and NGOs, two principal critics of the COLMIL's performance. He suggested that ongoing indigenous disturbances in the southeast (Cauca & Narino departments) were an opportunity to make contact and provide COLMIL perspective early in the news cycle. He stressed that the

human rights issue will only become more important in the first year of the next administration as paramilitary demobilization progresses. The Ambassador emphasized, however, that this was more than a matter of improving the COLMIL's image; the objective was to resolve any real underlying doubts about the COLMIL's human rights performance. The MOD agreed.

14. (C) The MoD admitted that the military justice system was in need of dramatic reform and stated his intention of firing General Puentes, who has been in charge of the effort. "Good man, but he isn't getting it done," said Ospina. The Ambassador noted that the military justice system needs to be improved so that it cooperates more effectively with the civilian justice system, which has overall responsibility for human rights cases, including those involving the military.

Comment

15. (C) The Ambassador's strong comments to the MOD and entire high command on April 22 that they had to do better struck a nerve. We understand there was some pushback from within the COLMIL high command, who were disappointed the MOD did not immediately rise to their defense in response to the Ambassador's criticism.

WOOD